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Many Elephant Bones. They and the Bodies With Flesh Yet on Them in Alaska. Muir's Strange Story. Behring Sea Can Be Bridged-How He Found the Great Glacier.

John Muir

MANY ELEPHANT BONES.

They and the Bodies With Flesh Yet on Them in Alaska.

MUIR'S STRANGE STORY.

Behring Sea Can Be Bridged—How He Found the Great Glacier.

"Elephants' tusks and bones, and, in many instances, their flesh yet sticking to the bones are found in the valley of the Yukon river," said Geologist John Muir to a reporter last night.

"There are so many things new and strange up there," added the discoverer of the greatest glacier in the world, "that have not yet come to the knowledge of the public that one who has seen them hesitates where to begin.

"Now, I said these elephant remains were found all over the great valley of the Yukon. As a matter of fact they are found everywhere throughout the great southwestern slope of Alaska.

"Dana and Sir Charles Lyell startled the world by announcing that hairy, frozen elephants were found wedged among the Siberian icebergs, but scarcely anybody knows that throughout Alaska are remains of countless thousands of these huge mastodons. You can dig them out and find them on the surface anywhere. I saw hundreds of them possibly on my last trip and I am now anxiously trying to get up there to complete my investigations.

LIKE MOLES IN THE GROUND.

"So thick are the elephant remains that the native Indians, on finding them buried partially in the ground, decided they were some kind of a great mole that burrowed in the soil. This is the story they gave me. I collected a lot of the remains, and I now have some well-preserved bones and some remarkably well-preserved tusks at my home in Martinez.

"The collecting of elephant tusks every summer is a regular business in Siberia, just over Behring sea. We have just as many of them on the Alaska side as they ever had in Siberia. Ages ago great herds of elephants roamed over these shores. Perhaps they existed down to a comparatively recent date, too, for the hairy bodies and the well-preserved bones give evidence of that.

BRIDGING BEHRING SEA.

"Senator Stanford's girdle of steel round the earth via Behring sea is a perfectly feasible scheme. The Behring strait can be bridged. It is only sixty miles across in the narrowest place, and there are three islands strung along in it. This would divide the bridge up into four divisions.

"But, besides this, the water is very shallow. In many places it is not over twenty feet deep. I undertake to say that if a man was strong enough to take one of our California redwood trees in his hand he could put it down anywhere over the 600 miles of the Behring sea and yet have 100 feet of it left above water.

"This shows how easy it would be to bridge the straits. The only trouble would be from floating icebergs, but that could easily be overcome by constructing swinging bridges like they have across the river at Chicago. In this way the straits could be kept clear all the time and locomotives and trains of cars could run right along.

HOW VANCOUVER MISSED IT.

"About the Muir glacier? Well, it is curious how I found that. It is to-day almost an unknown chapter in explorations. It was in '73 that I first went up there. In my course along the Alaskan coast I followed the chart of old Vancouver, the British explorer, who ninety-three years ago turned his prows in those unknown seas. I found his chart singularly correct. Every little bay and island were correctly marked. There are thousands of islands up there, too, and I was constantly surprised to see how accurate he had got all of them down.

"Finally, when I got away up in the vicinity of Cross Sound I met an Indian who told me that from that on I would have to take my own wood. I was astonished at this, for everywhere for hundreds and hundreds of miles on our route we had seen nothing but the densest kinds of forests. Well, I told him all right, to go ahead and cut some wood, and he and a lot more did so and put it aboard.

BARE LAND EVERYWHERE.

"We went ahead, and pretty soon we struck the entrance to what seemed a great bay. I looked at Vancouver's chart and couldn't find it marked there. There was no mention of it anywhere. The shores all about, as far as I could see, were bare. The whole country was denuded. Some half petrified stumps and pieces of stone conifers could be seen, and that was all. We steamed up the bay for forty miles, and there found the great glacier, which now bears my name.

"It was about six or seven miles by fifty or sixty in extent, and down in front it was 1,000 feet out of water. Pieces were breaking off all the time at intervals of a minute and a half or two minutes, and falling into the water with a tremendous roar. Of course, we heard this roaring long before we came in sight of the glacier.

FOG AND ICEBERGS.

"Then I looked at my chart again, and found how it was that Vancouver missed it. The end of the bay was full of floating icebergs, combined with a big fog. It wasn't Vancouver himself, but one of his men in a small boat that had steered round to the entrance. There he reported solid ice. The fog and the floating ice gave him that impression, and that is why Vancouver did not find the great glacier."

Mr. Muir says he has by no means yet completed his explorations in Alaska, and that in regard to the elephant remains, the bridging of Behring sea, and other matters there, he hopes to add some information that will be of great value to science.